

VZCZCXRO7117
PP RUEHAG RUEHROV
DE RUEHCV #0021 0081753
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 081753Z JAN 08
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0393
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 000021

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

HQSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
DEPT PASS TO AID/OTI RPORTER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/08/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SWEARS-IN NEW LEADERSHIP, FLORES
MAINTAINS POSITION

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT R. DOWNES
FOR REASON 1.4 (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY. The National Assembly (NA) swore-in its new leadership team January 6. Cilia Flores, the current NA president, will serve out another term. Roberto Hernandez of the pro-government Communist Party (PCV) replaces Desiree Santos Amaral as First Vice President, while Jose Alborno, Secretary General of the pro-government party Patria Para

SIPDIS

Todos (PPT), was named Second Vice President. The election of Alborno to the directorate and the elevation of Hernandez may be an attempt to make amends with dissenting voices within pro-government circles, such as PPT and the PCV. END SUMMARY.

Flores Will Lead NA for Another Term

12. (SBU) Cilia Flores first assumed the National Assembly's (NA's) presidency in August 2006 after her common-law husband Nicolas Maduro was named Foreign Minister. Flores is a staunch Chavista and one of the Venezuelan president's most trusted implementors. She is often criticized by the independent media and the opposition for her unwavering loyalty to President Chavez. Flores pushed Chavez's package of constitutional reforms through the NA quickly in 2007. A lawyer by training, Flores defended military personnel and civilians who participated in a Chavez-led coup in February 1992 and a second attempted coup in November 1992, directed by others.

13. (SBU) Roberto Hernandez of the Communist Party (PCV) moved up to become First Vice President of the NA. Hernandez was appointed Second Vice President in August 2006. (Note: The PCV, a pro-government party, has thus far refused to join Chavez's United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), but supported the pro-Chavez "Yes" camp during the failed constitutional reform campaign. End Note). He is a former president of the PCV and a former legal advisor to the NA. He maintained a relatively low profile as NA Second Vice President.

14. (C) Jose Alborno is the newest member of the directorate and was appointed Second Vice President. He is the Secretary General of Patria Para Todos (PPT) and a deputy from Guarico state. He is an anthropologist by training. Alborno has continued to meet with Embassy officials over the past few years even when Podemos officials declined to do so. He told

Poloff on November 14, 2007 that he secretly hoped Chavez would lose the December 2 constitutional referendum (Protect).

15. (SBU) Unlike Podemos, the pro-government party that worked openly against the referendum, PPT and Albornoz in particular have been trying to curry favor with Chavez. Albornoz publicly speaks in favor of the PSUV, although his party has not yet joined its ranks. In 2006, he led a NA witch hunt investigation of the opposition NGO Sumate.

Comment

16. (C) Because the opposition boycotted the 2005 parliamentary elections, only pro-government politicians were elected to the NA. Nevertheless, the election of the new NA leadership team was reportedly contentious and lasted until the early morning hours of January 6. Following the swearing-in ceremony, several party members from PCV, PPT, and Podemos criticized Flores' re-election, citing rampant corruption within the NA, her inability to push through important legislative measures, and her outspoken political loyalty to Chavez. Given this infighting, the election of Albornoz could signal an attempt by the government to reach out to dissenting voices within pro-Chavez circles, such as PCV and PPT.

DUDDY